

**STATEMENT OF STACEY SNIDER  
CHAIRMAN, UNIVERSAL PICTURES  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,  
SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION**

**September 27, 2000**

Good morning, Chairman McCain, Senator Hollings, members of the Senate Commerce Committee. My name is Stacey Snider and I am Chairman of Universal Pictures, a film company that has a rich and legendary history. We create films that entertain people around the world.

In a given year – and over the course of many years – our films run the gamut. Our library includes everything from *The Mummy* to *Schindler's List* – and all varieties and genres in between.

Our films make people laugh – they make people cry. They help people walk in other's shoes – and, in so doing, often shed light on important and difficult social issues.

This past year alone, Universal Pictures released *Erin Brockovich*, *U-571*, *The Nutty Professor II* and, this coming Thanksgiving, *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. This cross-section of films reflects the fact that we make our movies for a global audience that includes people of different ages and backgrounds.

At the outset, I want the Committee to understand that we take your views and those of the Federal Trade Commission seriously. The Report is comprehensive and important. It has already received our attention; and it will continue to receive ongoing study.

In fact, since the release of the Report, I have met several times with my colleagues at the motion picture group. Our discussions have been lively and provocative; many of the ideas that we discussed are on the list of industry initiatives presented to the Committee earlier today. They will be adopted by the team at Universal Pictures, and will be supplemented by other actions both to help parents and to refine the marketing of films.

When it comes to making appropriate choices for children, my colleagues and I must balance and weigh the same factors that are presented to all parents. I have two daughters myself – Katie and Natalie – and I have to review the same sources in order to make appropriate choices and decisions for them.

The MPAA rating is my first stop. Virtually every parent is familiar with the movie ratings system. We support the system and the many websites that have been created recently to bolster it. I can consult *parentalguide.com*, for example, to get descriptions of the movie, TV, videogame, and music ratings. *Filmratings.com* and *MPAA.org* also enable me to read specific explanations of ratings for specific films.

Next, I will consult the family filmgoer column of my local newspaper. These columns, which are carried throughout the country, provide useful descriptions, not only of objectionable scenes, but also of moral and social issues that my kids may or may not be prepared for.

I know as a film executive that these columns, like all movie reviews, have a tremendous impact on our audiences.

Finally, I can rely on other parents' word-of-mouth recommendations. These resources help parents in their role as judges of what their children should and should not see. And, at Universal, we support these resources, and others like the V-chip, which help parents fulfill their responsibilities.

Our commitment to the ratings system and to the industry's use of the V-chip means that some people who would otherwise see Universal movies and TV programs will be unable to do so. That means a loss of revenue for the studio. Nevertheless, we believe that these tools that support parents should be utilized fully.

I appreciate that parents may often feel overwhelmed by contemporary culture. However, everything from the local movie critic to ratings information on the Internet means that parents have more information than ever on which to base their decisions. When it comes to tools and information for parents, we are living in an age of abundance.

In a free society, however, it is impossible to completely restrict advertising to people 17 and older. No matter how carefully we target our advertising, some people under 17 will inevitably see ads for R-rated movies in specific media with broad demographic reach. In fact, their parents or adult guardians might choose to attend those movies with them.

Monday Night Football is a classic example of that, and also a good place to advertise movies. Here, we may market toward men and young adults, but some young football fans whose parents let them watch will also see our ads. By the way, they will also see ads for other products their parents might not want them to consume.

When younger fans see an advertisement for an R-rated film it is important to keep a few things in mind.

First, the ad for the R-rated film is not itself R-rated. To the contrary, it is approved by the MPAA for viewing by a general audience and it carries the restriction that younger filmgoers can only attend if they are accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Incidentally, we do not condone underage filmgoers sneaking in to R-rated films; and we support the recent pledge by theater owners to do a better job checking ID's and enforcing the ratings.

Second, there are many films we've released in the recent past which were R-rated, but that would be more than appropriate for certain young filmgoers to see with their parents. I am referring to thought-provoking stories like *In the Name of the Father*, *The Hurricane* or *Schindler's List*, which derive their power from their intensity – and still would be suitable viewing for certain mature children.

In balancing all of these complex issues – our responsibility to parents, to film enthusiasts and to the community at large – we must also include our commitment to support the artistic freedom of writers, directors, actors and all the other people who collaborate in the process of making movies.

Before I close, I want to assure the Committee that upon returning to my office, my colleagues and I will continue to invest time addressing the issues raised by the FTC and members of this Committee. Universal Studios creates entertainment for a global audience. We are very aware of filmgoers' broad range of tastes, interests, cultures and beliefs. Our objectives are to continue making films that satisfy and inspire and to support initiatives that ensure informed decisions about viewing choices.

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